

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

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**Diplomat Mustafa Ferroukhi “From Miliana to Beijing, 1922–1960”  
The Journey of the First Algerian Ambassador to China**

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**Abstract**

The leaders of the Algerian Revolution understood the necessity of diplomatic action as a complement to the armed struggle. Algerian diplomats relied on a firm strategy designed to counter French diplomacy. After 1956, Algerian diplomacy gained renewed momentum with the arrival of new figures who proved their effectiveness in both political struggle and diplomatic work within the various trends of the national movement. Their academic level also reached notable heights. This article presents an overview of the activities of the first ambassador appointed by the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic.

**Keywords:** Ferroukhi, Miliana, Algerian Council, Diplomacy, Provisional Government, China

**INTRODUCTION**

Algerian diplomacy played a central role during the War of Liberation. It complemented the armed struggle and confronted French diplomacy and its hostile propaganda. Algerian diplomats worked with great effort to secure both moral and material support for their just cause. This becomes clear when examining the role of the martyr Mustafa Ferroukhi in China and Vietnam.

**Social Background**

**Education**

Mustafa Ferroukhi was born in Miliana on 15 December 1922. He came from a modest, respected, and conservative family whose roots went back to the Froukha tribe in the Mitidja region. His parents were honorable people who devoted great care to his upbringing and education. He was raised to value knowledge and virtue. He grew up disciplined and fond of study.

He completed his primary education in Miliana and earned his primary certificate from the European School of Miliana in 1937. In the same year, his friend Mohamed Marouk earned the same certificate from the Indigenous School in Miliana with good distinction, together with Zouaghi Bachir (Miliana, 24/05/1937, p. 05).

Later, Ferroukhi, along with Mohamed Marouk and Bachir Zouaghi, obtained the Certificate of Complementary Studies for Indigenous Students in the summer of 1938. This certificate allowed them to move on to the Shar‘i School (Miliana, 24/05/1937, p. 05).

He joined the Thaalibia School in Algiers in the 1940 academic year (LA MÉDERSA, p. 02). There, he was one of the outstanding students. He also followed national events closely and paid attention to general political affairs. (The school was often known as the “three state schools” or the “official schools.” It was also called the Shar‘iyya because it taught Islamic law, jurisprudence, and religious subjects. See: Abu al-Qasim Saadallah, *Cultural History of Algeria*, vol. 3, p. 367.)

### **Political Engagement in the PPA and MTL**

Students in Algiers, especially those at the Thaalibia School, maintained close ties with party activists. Through his regular contact with them, Ferroukhi became one of the trusted young members. He was thought to be responsible for guiding some students politically, following party instructions, since he was himself a student of the same institution.

Mustafa soon met several activists, especially those studying at the Thaalibia School. He found that his inclinations were close to theirs, and he admired the radical independence ideas they supported. He joined them and, from that period on, was considered an active supporter of the Algerian People’s Party.

Because of his early commitment to nationalist ideas, and because the party trusted him, he was assigned—while still a first-year student—to maintain contact between the party’s branch in Algiers and its branch in Miliana. He regularly carried oral instructions and messages. Over time, he became a committed activist in the party. He worked with dedication and often sacrificed his studies, since the party needed educated youth to prepare leaflets and articles. These circumstances pushed Mustafa to devote himself more to party work at the expense of his studies. His sincerity and his dual education earned him the trust and respect of party leaders (Al-Alawi, n.d., p. 08; Al-Alawi, *From Semando to Miliana: Memoirs of Sheikh Director Mohamed al-Tayeb al-Alawi, 1928–1956*, 2018.)

During holidays, Mustafa continued his political activity in complete secrecy with fellow activists of the Algerian People’s Party: El-Sadeq Batel, Mohamed Marouk, Mohamed Qallai, and Ibrahim Bouzar. All of them were from Miliana. (It is notable that most of these activists had studied with Ferroukhi in the same class during the 1930s. See *L’Echo d’Alger*, 05/06/1938 and 19/06/1938.)

The party endured significant pressure and its members were subjected to harsh repression. Anyone suspected of belonging to the party also faced restrictions. The party eventually resumed its political activity under a new name—the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties—in preparation for the legislative elections scheduled for 10 November 1946 (Benjamin, 2002, pp. 197–198.)

### **Mustafa Ferroukhi and the Algerian Assembly**

When the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties (MTLD) decided to run in elections for all councils, it first presented lists for the municipal councils. These lists included only party activists. On this basis, a list was formed in Miliana in 1947 with Mohamed Marouk at its head. The movement achieved remarkable success. Many voters in both cities and rural areas supported it. It won the votes of about 110 municipalities, including major Algerian cities, with the exception of a few important ones such as Miliana (Al-Alawi, Mustafa Froukhi: *Martyr of the Nation and Duty*, manuscript, n.d., p. 10).

In this way, the movement confirmed the unity of the people with it. It gained most of the seats in major cities and even in rural areas, despite many irregularities recorded during these elections (Qaddash, 2008, p. 1060).

This success encouraged the movement to run again for the Algerian Assembly in 1948. Yet the choice of candidate became a problem for the leadership. It examined the issue carefully. It noted that Sadek Batoul—one of Froukhi's childhood friends, known for his role in the SC Miliana football team—had left the party and moved to Algiers. For this reason, the movement nominated Mohamed Marok for the municipal council. He succeeded and became Deputy Mayor of Miliana. He later became one of the leaders of the Special Organization (OS). The movement also nominated Mohamed Qalai in the same list. He was elected as well and was, at the same time, the Miliana regional leader of the OS (Al-Alawi, Mustafa Ferroukhi: *Martyr of the Nation and Duty*, manuscript, n.d., p. 10).

This meant that both men could not be nominated again for the Algerian Assembly. The choice was now between two figures: Mustafa Froukhi and Ibrahim Bouzar. Bouzar came from a government-affiliated family. Most of its members held posts in the French administration, and one of his relatives was the town's qaid. It was unlikely that he would bring the votes of his own family to the party. Thus, the only viable candidate left was Mustafa. He was a young man who met all the requirements for membership in the Algerian Assembly. He was educated in both languages. His activism was firm and clean. He had shown loyalty and sincerity over a sufficient period. He also came from a popular family willing to vote in a patriotic spirit, which would give the movement a significant number of votes. Bouzar could not accept this reasoning. His misjudgment of the situation led him to leave the party entirely and join the Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto, founded in 1946 and popularly known as "Ferhat Abbas's Party (Al-Alawi, *From Semendo to Miliana: Memoirs of Sheikh Mohamed al-Tayyib al-Alawi, 1928–1956*, 2018, p. 273).

Mustafa won by a wide margin over the candidates of other parties and over the administration's candidate. Some candidates were arrested during the electoral campaign, as happened with many of the national deputies running for the Algerian Assembly. More than fifty candidates were detained. Yet Naegelen's maneuvers were met with determination. The activists watched the ballot boxes closely to prevent fraud. One activist near Aïn Defla could find no solution when he saw the administration filling the box before him, so he seized it and fled with it. Despite all this, Mustafa's victory under such conditions was far from easy. His success intensified the hostility of rivals from many parties, and even from within his own movement. He, however, dedicated all his efforts to serving the party. In his speeches, articles, and interventions inside the Assembly, he denounced

French colonial policy. He thus changed, in the eyes of the French administration, from a calm and peaceful student into a deputy who openly opposed colonial authority. This often brought him into conflict with local officials, exposing him and his family to repeated harassment (Al-Alawi, Mustafa Froukhi: Martyr of the Nation and Duty, manuscript, n.d.).

Mustafa was elected to the Algerian Assembly within a very limited group set by the colonial administration at only seven members. Their names were: Mustafa Froukhi, Shawqi Mustafawi, Mohamed al-Hajj al-Sharshali, Mohamed al-Arabi Damaq al-Atarus, Ahmed Bouda, Djilali Mubarak, and al-Amin Belhadi (Jacques Jurquet, *La Révolution nationale algérienne et le Parti communiste français*, vol. 2).

With this, Mustafa entered a new stage in his political life at the national level. He became a deputy in an assembly that the national movement had rejected when the issue of Algeria and its legal status was discussed in the French Parliament. Yet the noble aim of bringing attention to the Algerian cause and spreading the idea of independence among the widest sectors of society convinced the party to participate and to use the institution internally and externally, given that its deputies enjoyed parliamentary immunity. This was despite the fact that this Assembly embodied the “Algeria Law” of 1947, which Algerian deputies in the French Parliament had rejected. They expressed their opposition by leaving the chamber during the vote, despite their differing political orientations.

In the first session, the party’s deputies took an action that surprised the French administration, the French deputies, and the press. The Assembly, chaired by Lacquier, opened its session with the French national anthem, *La Marseillaise*, and all present were expected to stand. Would the national movement deputies stand or not? They stood and listened to the anthem. When it ended, the Europeans and their supporters sat down. The national deputies remained standing. They then raised their voices and recited the Algerian national anthem:

Fidā’u al-Jazā’iri rūḥī wa-mālī

Alā fī sabīli al-ḥurriya

Falyahya Hizb al-Sha‘b al-ghālī

Wa-Najm Shamal Ifriqiyya

Walyahya jund al-istiqlāl

Mithāl al-fidā’ wa-l-waṭaniyya

Waltaḥya al-Jazā’ir mithla al-hilāl

Waltaḥya fihā al-‘arabiyya (Mufdi Zakaria, 2007, p. 42)

At the end of July 1951, and as a reaction to the fraudulent legislative elections held on 17 June 1951, several leaders formed a preparatory committee to create an Algerian Front for the Defense of Freedom and its Respect. Among them were Sheikh al-Arabi al-Tebessi and Sheikh Mohamed Khayreddine of the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars; Dr. Ahmed Francis and Professor Qaddour Sator of the Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto; Ahmed Mazghena and Mustafa Froukhi of the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties; and Ahmed Mahmoudi and Paul Caballero of the Algerian Communist Party. The committee aimed to:

- annul the legislative elections of 17 June 1951, during which the colonial administration appointed individuals who did not represent the Algerian people;
- guarantee freedom of voting in the second electoral college;
- ensure freedom of conscience, thought, press, and assembly;
- fight repression in all its forms and work for the release of political detainees and the abolition of arbitrary measures taken against al-Hajj Messali;
- end the French administration's interference in Islamic religious affairs. (Hamri, 2016; Al-Manar, no. 6, 30 July; Tawfiq al-Madani, 1977, p. 403).

### **Parliamentary Work as Fieldwork**

The deputy of the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties lived under harsh conditions. Some observers, from a distance, believed that his situation was comfortable. In fact, the party received his full monthly salary, which was 160,000 francs. It then gave him only 19,000 francs. When the leadership realized how difficult life was with such a small allowance, which did not meet basic needs, it raised the amount to 30,000 francs. The deputy received this allowance as any ordinary party official would.

Mustafa was known for his generosity. He spent whatever reached his pocket. He often hosted his friends at the expense of his father, a modest tradesman who never hesitated to assist national militants or provide them with comfort during their stay. (Al-'Alawi, Mustafa Froukhi: Martyr of the Nation and Duty, typescript, n.d., p. 11)

The deputy of this party carried out difficult and dangerous tasks. He handled the heavy work entrusted to him. Since Mustafa was a leader and a member of the Central Committee, he bore responsibilities that required travel, long hours, and constant commitment. These responsibilities included relations with political and cultural figures and organizations, relations with administrative authorities, and external affairs. (Ben Khedda, p. 226)

Entrusting him with such duties reflected his competence, tact, social disposition, natural diplomacy, and flexibility in dealing with others, while protecting the party's interests. He also handled many matters beyond his original assignment. He never complained. He even saw in this work a form of satisfaction despite its dangers. He represented the party in meetings and conferences, wrote speeches for some fellow deputies, and prepared articles for the party press. At the same time, he delivered secret leaflets and party newspapers to Miliana and nearby villages. The

leadership assumed that his parliamentary status would protect him, although France did not recognize any form of immunity for Algerians.

He transported leaflets, instructions, and party newspapers—he supervised *Sawt al-Sha‘b* in 1952 and *Al-Umma al-Jazā’iriyya* in 1954 (interview with his daughter Zlikha Fadel, born Froukhi, Miliana, July 2017). He handed them to Ahmed Ben Bleyidia, a shoemaker in Miliana and a militant known for his simplicity and for his shop’s discreet location. Ben Bleyidia distributed the material with remarkable speed and precision. Once he received the leaflets, news spread quickly among neighborhood leaders, and each came to collect his share, as if the shop owner did not know them.

It was a race against the police. The distribution process had to outpace French surveillance. Thus, the deputy of the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties lived in a permanent state of alert. He was also expected to give lectures and hold meetings with militants to raise their morale. Many lived in severe psychological distress with their families. Some even distanced themselves from relatives to avoid harsh administrative and police measures. In many cases, their friends cut ties with them when they heard of their links to the party (Al-‘Alawi, Mustafa Froukhi, p. 12)

### **From Political Struggle to Revolutionary Action**

A few days after the outbreak of the National Liberation Revolution, he and five of his companions were arrested and imprisoned. In 1955, he was released but remained under house arrest. He helped organize the ranks of the revolution with the support of Souidani Boujemaa in the Amrouna area and among the Ouled Sidi Cheikh.

French authorities arrested him again for his revolutionary and anti-colonial activity. He escaped from Miliana prison in February 1956 and reached Algiers, where he worked in the intelligence network. He later took part in revolutionary action in France, where he established a network of commandos in February 1957.

The FLN cell at the port of Algiers sent Mustafa Froukhi as part of the crew of a ship bound for France. There, he had to wait several months until his network became effective. Its targets were industrial zones and military centers in Paris, Lyon, Saint-Étienne, and Marseille. He worked to strengthen the armed organization in France. The revolutionary leadership then summoned him to Tunisia. He crossed the French-Italian border in disguise, dressed as a clergyman, and was appointed acting administrative secretary in the Provisional Government. (Interview with Mrs. Zoulikha Ferroukhi, Miliana, 1 July 2017)

### **The Diplomat’s Portfolio**

Before examining Mustafa Froukhi’s diplomatic activity, it is necessary to recall that the leadership of the revolution—represented by the FLN’s external delegation—initially set up permanent presence centers in the capitals of friendly and allied states. These states served as natural supporters and rear bases for the Algerian Revolution. These representations were known as the

FLN offices and missions. Their aim was to gain international support, expose French practices, and widen the political space needed to confront the rigidity of the Fourth French Republic.

After the establishment of the first Provisional Algerian Government on 19 September 1958, this external representation expanded. The GPRA appointed representatives in all Arab capitals. The structure and activity of some offices reached the level of embassies of sovereign states. The government also sent representatives to countries in Africa and Asia. An office was opened in New Delhi by Cherif Khellal, and Abd al-Rahman Kiwan was appointed head of the Beijing mission. (Omar Boudierba, *The Role of the FLN Offices in Mobilizing Support for the Algerian Cause in Western Europe, 1955–1960*, Academy of Social and Human Sciences, no. 20, June 2018, pp. 29–33)

The external offices were established in states that recognized the Provisional Government. Missions were created in countries that recognized neither the FLN nor the GPRA. Each office or mission was headed by a chief appointed by the Council of Ministers. He exercised his duties in the host country and sometimes in neighboring countries without FLN representation. For example, the work of Mohamed Yazid and Abdelkader Chanderli extended from the United States to Latin America and Canada. The same applied to Lakhdar Brahimi, whose activity extended beyond Indonesia to Malaysia. Each office chief was assisted by a deputy; under the second and third Provisional Governments, a military adviser and a political adviser were also added. (Boudierba, pp. 29–33)

### **The Diplomatic Role of the FLN Football Team**

The FLN football team was established in the spring of 1958, in April, when Algerian players in the French league secretly left for Tunisia through neighboring countries. The FLN chose this timing to create media impact and psychological effect. Tunisia was chosen because of its geographic proximity and the support expressed by President Habib Bourguiba and the Tunisian people. The event shocked the French police, who failed to detect it. It was seen as a victory for the FLN in France, especially since the players involved were among the best in the league. (Al-Ahmar Qada, *The Role of the FLN Football Team in Promoting the Algerian Cause, 1958–1962*, *Maghreb Journal of Historical and Social Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 143–148)

The team's early history unfolded in secrecy during the French occupation. Mohamed Boumezrag, an FLN member in France, contacted ten of the most prominent players of Algerian origin in the French league: Kermali, Mekhloufi, Zitouni, Boubekeur, Bekhloufi Kaddour, Amar Rouai, Aribi, Brahimi, and Bouchouk. This took place during the World Youth Festival of 1958. He asked them to leave France secretly and head to Tunisia, where the team was founded on 12 April 1958. (Al-Ahmar Qada, pp. 143–148)

Despite the pressure exerted by the French authorities—who even attempted to persuade some teams not to face the young FLN squad—the team played against many clubs in European and Asian cities. It also played against national teams and military selections. The players travelled

constantly from one country to another, then returned to Tunisia, where they had their base with strong support from the Tunisian authorities. (El-Heddaf, 24 November 2014)

A tour of Eastern Europe took place between May and June 1959. It marked the team's first matches in Europe. Eastern European states offered strong support for the Algerian Revolution, as they were socialist and opposed to colonial powers, particularly France. The FLN players played around twenty matches in Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Poland, the Soviet Union, and Czechoslovakia. Their tour began in Sofia. (El-Heddaf, 24 November 2014)

A second major tour took them to Southeast Asia between October and December 1959. This region hosted one of the largest socialist blocs in the world. The team played eleven matches in China and Vietnam. They played five matches in Beijing (two), Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Tianjin. They then moved to Vietnam, where they played six additional matches. They won all games except one draw and one loss in China. (Al-Ahmar Qada, pp. 143–148)

Mustafa Froukhi accompanied the team during this tour. His diplomatic skill became evident, and the authorities of those friendly states admired him. Some expressed their wish that he would one day serve as ambassador of an independent Algeria.

The Provisional Government assigned Mustafa, after his arrival in Tunisia, to accompany the team on its trip to Vietnam. There, he was warmly received by General Giap and President Ho Chi Minh (see: Visit of the Algerian National Football Team to Vietnam in 1959. Meeting with President Ho Chi Minh). On 20 November 1959, the delegation also visited the camp of the Moroccan soldiers—Algerians, Tunisians, and Moroccans—who had deserted the French army after refusing to fight Vietnamese forces in Indochina. (Delanoë, Poussières d'empires, pp. 61–97)

### **The End of the Journey**

The Chinese were impressed by Mustapha and by his rapid mastery of their language. He had traveled to China in 1959 as the head of the Algerian Youth Delegation. When China later agreed to accept Algerian diplomatic representation, Krim Belkacem proposed him as the first Algerian representative in China. In June 1960, he left Tunisia for Egypt, where he was officially appointed Ambassador of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic in Beijing.

On his journey, he died along with his wife and three of his children. His fourth child, Zlikha, aged eight, survived because she had remained in Miliana with her grandfather, Mohamed Froughi. The tragedy occurred when the Russian-made Ilyushin-18 aircraft exploded over the skies of Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, on 17 August 1960. Mustapha and his family were initially buried in Tunisia. After Algerian independence, their remains were transferred to El Alia Cemetery in Algiers.

The poet Moufdi Zakaria composed an elegy for the martyr during the solemn funeral held in Tunisia. He mourned Mustapha Froughi, who perished along with his entire family. In his poem “*Asfīran Naḥwa Amlāk al-Samāʾ*?” (“An Envoy Toward the Realms of Heaven?”), he reflects on the plane that was carrying them from Cairo to Beijing (Rahmani, p. 208).

The poet assigns words associated with fire the meaning of light. Fire becomes a symbol of illumination that confounds the world and fascinates the poet. He urges the martyr to convey this light to the heavens and the celestial spheres. Mustapha rises as a light toward the sky to recount the flames of Algeria. The fire consumed the bodies of Mustapha and his family—his wife, his daughters Nassiba and Souad, and his son Ahmed Chawqi (Al-Alawi, Mustapha Froughi: Martyr of the Nation and Duty, manuscript, n.d., p. 34). Yet the blaze did not prevent his light from shining. His memory endures among the martyrs of Algeria. While fire usually leaves only ashes, the flames that engulfed the plane produced a light that shines upon the world across time, narrating the heroism of a nation.

### **The Poem**

Which hawk disappeared in the skies  
Which star went out at the end of time  
An envoy rising toward the realms of heaven,  
Or were you sent, Mustapha, to Beijing  
Did he see on the horizon something that stirred him,  
A noble vision in the land of China calling him near  
Or did his eyes confuse what they beheld,  
Thinking the horizon itself was China, and so he stayed satisfied  
Did he see eternity close at hand and approach it,  
And turn aside when he saw others like him  
He sought honor on earth  
Did it call him from the sky, so he departed  
Or did the martyrs see him rise toward them,  
And call him to fulfill his vow (Rahmani, p. 209)

### **Conclusion**

Although the life of the diplomat-martyr Mustapha Ferroukhi from Miliana remained largely unknown until recently, those who worked in this challenging field and who knew his story regard it as a lasting lesson. His life inspires them to continue serving the homeland sincerely, without expecting reward or recognition from anyone.

## Notes and References

1. Among the elections that drew exceptional attention was the Algerian Council election of 1948. This election involved all national parties, including the Movement for the Victory of Democratic Freedoms. It was marked by all forms of deception, fraud, repression, and persecution of activists and some candidates (Jaquer, December 2008, pp. 113–122).
2. **Naegelen (1892–1978)**: After the war, Naegelen served as Minister of Education and later as Governor General of Algeria, although he did not stay long (1948–1951). He ran for the French presidential election in 1953 and lost. His name became associated with electoral fraud in Algeria during the 1948 Algerian Council election (Houria Ben Fadda).
3. The activist Molough Belkacem in Jumaa Oulad Cheikh, then part of Thénia El-Had, seized the ballot box and delivered it to activist Mustapha Froughi at the party headquarters in Khemis Miliana. Similarly, the activist Boulouha in the Taghzoult area also seized and destroyed the ballot box (Ben Smaili, 2013, pp. 143–183). See also Guy Pervillé, *La SFIO, Guy Mollet et l'Algérie de 1945 à 1955*, in *Guy Mollet, un camarade en République*, Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1987; and *La gestion radicale de l'Algérie, 1950–1955*, in *Cahiers d'Histoire* (Lyon), vol. XXI, 1986, no. 3–4.

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For the martyr Mustapha, his wife, his two daughters, and his son, days before their martyrdom

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